

*and Lettes of Perfection*; the pseudo-Isidorian *Counsels*; and, finally, an excerpt of his own sermon *On Detraction*—were highly appropriate for Catholics living in a post-Catholic England. In addition to her meticulous work in linking texts to wider spiritual and intellectual developments on the continent, Erler offers the rather provocative and quite sensible position that this work above all evinces continuation: first, of Whitford as author of works on spiritual direction; second, of the conservation—in some form—of monastic community; and finally, of an audience still eager for Syon books.

Mary Erler's monograph adds much to a scholarly conversation that is once more attracting broad interest and forcing reconsiderations of previous assumptions. Much of what makes this book so rich is the meticulous detail Erler provides in delineating the multiple positions available to religious—aligning with more pronounced reforming impulses; advocating for renewal within existing institutional frameworks; or, like many, straddling both camps by seeking to adapt religious life to the spiritual climate in England as it evolved.

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Jeremy L. Smith, *Verse & Voice in Byrd's Song Collections of 1588 and 1589*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016, pp. 337, £60, ISBN: 978-1-78327-082-8

In 1976, Hugh Aveling declared in the *Handle and the Axe* that so-called Catholic 'apologists...have always done their best to prove that recusants provided most of the glory of the Elizabethan age', citing the example of William Byrd. This, he continued, was 'special pleading' because Byrd himself was a 'conformist and most of his religious compositions were for the Anglican liturgy'. Moreover, he concluded dismissively, 'the creative achievements of...English Catholics are much what we should expect of a small nonconformist community'. Thankfully, recent scholars have demonstrated the importance of English Catholics and their creative achievements for the literature, music and politics of the age. Furthermore, musicologists including John Harley, Joseph Kerman, Craig Monson and Kerry McCarthy have significantly enhanced our understanding of Byrd's position as a Catholic recusant, loyal servant of the Crown, and vital cultural figure in Elizabethan and Jacobean religious politics. Much of this scholarship has focused on

Byrd's Latin-texted works, and in this monograph Jeremy Smith crucially adds to this picture, by exploring the moral, religious and political messages Byrd chose to express through his music in English.

Smith analyses Byrd's two English song collections: *Psalms, Sonets and Songs* (1588) and *Songs of sundrie natures* (1589), never before reflected upon in their entirety. Byrd's publications are explored sequentially across nine chapters (with an introduction and conclusion), and Smith uncovers the hitherto unnoticed story that Byrd intended to convey. He firmly rejects any remaining claims that Byrd was somehow 'unliterary', demonstrating Byrd's involvement with a significant musico-literary coterie that included figures such as Philip Sidney, Thomas Watson and Edmund Spenser.

Throughout the collections, Byrd freely manipulated poems to serve his own agenda without concern for their original author. One of the main reasons for this, Smith argues, was his imagined discourse with the Queen – vital when venturing into the public arena of print. Byrd made plain that he was a loyal servant: Elizabeth is portrayed as goddess in "Though Amarillis"; as Virgin Queen - 'a mayden chast' - in "Who likes to love"; and in "An earthly tree" the allusion to Christ's royal stature was intended as a compliment for the monarch.

At the same time, Byrd conveyed his deep commitment to his Catholic faith. Smith argues that Byrd's treatment of "Susanna" in both the 1588 and 1589 collections provided an outlet for Catholics to mourn their fallen heroine, Mary Queen of Scots. Byrd also lamented the execution of Edmund Campion by setting the first verse of Henry Walpole's well-known poem "Why do I use my paper, ink and pen" to music, as well as setting two subsequent verses which, as Smith explains, are unique to Byrd's setting. Byrd also recycled melodies such as the *Alleluia Christus resurgens* chant from the outlawed Sarum rite within the pair of English anthems "Christ rising - Christ is risen again" to bring the 1589 collection to a close on a firmly Catholic note. Smith also demonstrates how Byrd utilised temporal dynamics to invoke the controversial doctrine of purgatory in "If in thine" and "Unto the hills". In the latter, Byrd embroiled himself in the heated debates about Churching, where he argued that the theological ideas supported by the Established Church, in the face of puritan attacks, could be traced back to uniquely Catholic positions on the afterlife.

In so doing, Smith argues, Byrd hoped to highlight for the Queen the similarities in their views, showing her that he was closer to her than members of the puritan faction. Courtly politics is present throughout the collection, with the model courtier emerging in the form of Sir Philip Sidney. Byrd was explicit in his memorial to the

poet-soldier, dubbing the last two works of the entire 1588 collection “funerall songs of Sir Philip Sidney”. Smith argues that these songs and those beginning the 1589 collection form the ‘dilatatory space’ of the narrative. It is at this moment that Sidney himself steps figuratively into the story as ‘Philon’ in “While that the sun”. Moreover, although cast as muse in the 1588 collection (“Constant Penelope”), Lady Penelope Rich, Smith argues, was presented in 1589 as someone Sidney needed to reject in order to fulfil the requirements of a good death. With this deliverance, Byrd hoped to transcend ‘courtly factionalism and embrace the divided English nation as a whole’ (p.190).

The call for unity extended beyond the court in Byrd’s narrative, as he used the character of Hob in “Who made thee Hob, forsake the plough?” to prepare the way for an audience with Elizabeth. This audience was required in order for Byrd to promote an image of religious unity and fellowship. To really make his point, Byrd ‘set the stage’ and found ‘within his lexical and musical material the means of depicting a divided state’ (p.238). He did this, for example, by creating significant contrasts in his songs when they were approached sequentially such as placing a sonnet blazon “Of Gold” after a carol “From Virgin’s womb” at the close of his songs for five parts (1589). Moreover, the sonnet is in a musical style appropriate for a Catholic hymn, and his carol conforms very much to the style of a Protestant verse anthem. Smith has therefore unearthed what seems to be a remarkable plea by Byrd in these collections for a form of confessional tolerance.

Smith’s argument for the narrative arrangement of the entirety of this collection is compelling, and I was left wondering if we knew anything about the manuscript reception of his songs in sequence. Despite Smith’s assertion that the 1588 and 1589 collections are ‘practically unperformable in a continuous sequence’ (p.283), it seems important that new recordings are commissioned of the pieces performed consecutively, as Byrd intended.

Byrd, Smith concludes, was ground-breaking, ‘establishing new standards in composition and opening, through example, new vistas of opportunity for other composers to explore’ (p.295). In a similar way, Smith also provides ‘new vistas of opportunity’ for historians of Catholicism and early modern England. Through music, William Byrd expressed devotion, engaged with religious polemic, and, it seems, petitioned the Queen herself for a form of toleration, or at the very least for confessional ‘unity and fellowship’. *Voice and Verse* is vital reading for musicologists, contains much of great value for literary scholars, and must not be neglected by historians.